YPLC Report to Council November 2006

Date of issue 16 October 2006
LSC office National Office
Publication intent Public
Agenda item 8
Paper number LSC 48/2006

Background and introduction
1 The Young People’s Learning Committee met six times during the year ending September 2006. In each case the Committee met over two days, with an evening session on a specific topic followed by a business meeting the following morning. The Committee also met jointly with the Adult Learning Committee and the Equality and Diversity Committee in July 2006.
2 Since April 2006 advice notes have been produced after each meeting to summarise feedback from the Committee to any external speakers at the seminar sessions, and to advise the LSC executive and National Council on the issues discussed.

Purpose
3 This paper provides a summary of the key areas of work of the Young People’s Learning Committee over the year to September 2006.

Recommendation
4 The Council is asked to note and comment on the work of the Young People’s Learning Committee.

Key points/issues
5 The key themes considered during the year were:
   • Review of the 14-19 Implementation Plan
   • FE Reform White Paper
   • Funding and the comprehensive spending review
   • Strategic planning in partnership with local authorities
   • Quality - Framework for Excellence and Pursuing Excellence
• Young people who are not in education, employment or training
The Committee’s advice on these issues is summarised in the annex.

6 The Committee also received and commented on regular reports on the LSC’s performance and allocation of resources in respect of young people’s learning.

7 In May 2006 the Committee took the opportunity to visit a number of Colleges in Greater Manchester and meet with staff and students as well as with representatives from Greater Manchester LSC and Salford City Council.

8 The Committee’s work over the next year will again be focused on the key themes of funding, planning, curriculum, quality assurance, young people who are not in education, employment or training, schools and work-based learning. An advice note will be provided to Council following each of these sessions.

9 Throughout the year a range of stakeholders have expressed concerns about strategic planning and delivery of Information Advice and Guidance for young people and Employer Engagement in 14-19 reforms. The Committee has established two task groups to investigate and advise in more depth on these areas.

10 One member of the Committee, Danny Carrigan, resigned during the year. Three members have been put forward to the Appointments Committee for re-appointment.

Clearance

11 To be cleared by Ian Ferguson, YPLC Chairman

Paper creator Debbie Watson
Date created 4 October 2006
Annex: Summary of Advice from the Young People’s Learning Committee

The 14-19 Implementation Plan

- Communication is key but different messages are needed for specialist audiences (education and training sector) compared to non-specialist audiences (parents, employers, general public). The relationship of Specialised Diplomas to Apprenticeships should be clear so that employers can see and understand progression routes. It is important that they are not promoted as being only for the 40% who do not achieve 5 good GCSEs.

- Schools need to be encouraged to think through how they will deliver the entitlement and there is a need to engage with independent training providers as well as colleges to secure their contribution to vocational learning and increasing the capacity for placements for young people.

- Employers are being asked to provide a range of support for 14-19 reforms (work experience, work placements, apprenticeships, information, advice and guidance, professional development, curriculum design, governance, designing simulated work environments) and there is currently no infrastructure to facilitate this. There are some good links being made between individual institutions and employers but this is not universal. A different approach is needed to make the most of the enormous amount of goodwill that exists. The joint review by the DfES and LSC will develop this.

- Functional English and Maths need to be embedded in a vocational context and not just delivered in schools at 14-16. The relationship of functional skills to key skills and basic skills needs to be clarified. The assessment for functional skills should be about demonstrating competencies not sitting tests.

- There is a concern that in some areas Children’s Trusts will not have sufficient focus on 14-19 and that the Joint Area Review process will not identify issues and provoke action. Ofsted is piloting three 14-19 short reviews to provide a more in depth view. The LSC needs to clearly exercise its key role in local partnerships to maintain the impetus for reform.

FE Reform White Paper

- The recommendations of the review of planning and funding of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities led by Peter Little OBE, should be integrated into the White Paper.

- Although simplification of the landscape is important there are complexities inherent in trying to apply the same philosophies to all types of college and independent training provider.

- A strong steer is required on local collaboration, partnership and federation in order to deliver 14-19 reform. Schools and sixth form colleges that have not traditionally delivered vocational learning should be encouraged to be part of local partnerships to ensure that the full entitlement, including Specialised Diplomas, is available to all young people at all levels.
Funding and the comprehensive spending review

- The key feature is the aspirational target for 90% participation at 17 by 2015. However, in addition to a funding trajectory created by the target (influenced by the changing cohort size) the key funding considerations are the need for investment funds prior to achieving an increase in participation, the fact that reaching non participants and then funding their learning programme will be more expensive than the norm, and recognition that gaining a level of increased participation may mean that some young people will initially have ‘false starts’ and may drop out of learning, which has a cost.

- There must be a realistic understanding and assessment of the costs of 14-19 reform. Funding will be required for capital investment in facilities, revenue costs of practical learning programmes (diplomas) over and above theoretical learning, increased pastoral and information, advice and guidance support, the costs of collaboration including transport as more students undertake learning in a number of different institutions. There are also hidden costs of strengthened child protection arrangements, supervision arrangements and professional development for teachers and employees who may not have worked with pre-16 learners before.

- It would be helpful to have a holistic approach that brings together funding for provision in schools, colleges and in the work place and community for young people, rather than having separate funding streams with individual constraints, systems and therefore bureaucracies.

Strategic planning in partnership with local authorities

- It will be essential that the changes to Connexions partnership structures are managed effectively to support strategic 14-19 structures, in order to ensure that delivery of information, advice and guidance does not ‘disappear’ into separate institutions. There will be a continuing need for a mechanism for maintaining a strategic overview of quality and effectiveness. New standards are being developed.

- The successful development of the 14-19 curriculum, including work experience and work placements requires resources for dedicated staff to liaise with colleges, schools, independent training providers and employers. There is an urgent need to develop an overarching regional infrastructure and strategic plan for employer engagement at 14-19 to ensure appropriate allocation of resources.

- It is important not to underestimate how complex the matrix will be to offer 14 specialised Diploma lines at 3 levels in accessible places at an affordable price; the LSC at a local level will need to have a total picture of provision, including schools, to develop a commissioning model to collaboratively identify and fill gaps in provision. There is a need to clarify the levers for engagement of key partners in developing such a holistic strategy.
Many head teachers have not realised the implications of the 14-19 curriculum changes and are not starting to develop capacity in schools. 14-19 partnerships should be encouraged to begin curriculum planning and associated staff development as soon as possible.

Quality – Framework for Excellence and Pursuing Excellence

The goal for the Quality Improvement Strategy (Pursuing Excellence) and the Framework for Excellence should be a single model that applies across the whole sector (school sixth forms, colleges and training providers) with the same set of criteria being used by all agencies.

The whole sector approach is important, as it will enable better quality control of existing collaborative 14-16 provision - including the Increased Flexibility Programme, Young Apprenticeships and the School Engagement Programme, as well as vital work for the future in planning delivery of the new Diplomas.

Where possible existing processes that are respected by the sector and the public should be used (e.g. OFSTED inspections).

Measures should be developed that are not dependant on context or mission of the provider (e.g. employer responsiveness could be very different in a General FE College compared to a Sixth Form college if it only measures one dimension of employer engagement).

The collection of post-16 learning aims data from all secondary schools with sixth forms and subsequent calculation of qualification success rates for schools will be of great benefit to the LSC in introducing and applying fairer funding across all post-16 streams. This information also needs to be made available to potential learners (and parents) so that they can make more informed choices about their post-16 learning.

Young people not in education, employment or training

Tracking of young people who are not in education, employment or training is vitally important, and as part of the transition of the Connexions service, local authorities should be required to ensure that they have appropriate systems in place that can track individuals across administrative boundaries. It is essential that we are clear about the systems that will be available when the unique learner number is in place, so that no nugatory work is undertaken by local authorities.

There is a need to ensure an adequate and sustainable budget so that imaginative and engaging provision can be offered to these young people. The voluntary and community sector is key in developing innovative opportunities within local partnerships.

Robust local arrangements for assessment and support for young people on the ground need to be in place and should be culturally appropriate e.g. by training people from specific communities as mentors and advisors.